

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing of claims in the application:

Listing of claims:

Claim 1 (original) A process for producing a pet food comprising:

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mixing a protein source to produce an emulsion;

heating said emulsion above the boiling point of water;

pressurizing said emulsion in a confined pressurized zone;

coloring said emulsion in said confined pressurized zone; and

discharging said emulsion in discrete pieces or chunks of pet food.

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Claim 2 (currently amended) The process of Claim 1 wherein said protein source comprises at least one source selected from the group consisting of a vegetable source, a meat source, and a meat by-product source.

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Claim 3 (currently amended) The process of Claim 2 wherein said vegetable source comprises at least one source selected from the group consisting of a soy source, a corn source, a rice source, a peanut source, a sunflower source, a linseed source, a canola source, and a wheat source.

Claim 4 (currently amended) The process of Claim 2 ~~or Claim 3~~ wherein said meat source comprises at least one source selected from the group consisting of a beef source, a chicken source, a fish source, and a pork source.

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Claim 5 (original) The process of Claim 4 wherein said meat source contains from about 15% to about 25% fat by weight.

Claim 6 (original) The process of Claim 4 wherein said meat source contains less than 15% fat by weight.

Claim 7 (currently amended) The process of Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding Claims~~ wherein the emulsion has a protein to fat ratio of at least 1.5:1.

Claim 8 (currently amended) The process of Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding Claims~~ wherein said emulsion is heated to a temperature between about 104°C and about 118°C.

5 Claim 9 (currently amended) The process of Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding Claims~~ wherein said emulsion has a moisture content from about 45% to about 80% by weight.

Claim 10 (currently amended) The process of Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding Claims~~ wherein said confined pressurized zone is at least one of an elongated tubular member and a holding tube.

10 Claim 11 (original) The process of Claim 10 wherein the emulsion is restricted in said holding tube for a predefined period of time.

Claim 12 (currently amended) The process of Claim 10 ~~or Claim 11~~ wherein the emulsion is contained in said holding tube having a pressure above the vapor pressure of said emulsion.

15 Claim 13 (original) The process of Claim 12 wherein the emulsion is retained in said holding tube under a pressure greater than its vapor pressure until the protein in said emulsion has coagulated to form a firm emulsion.

20 Claim 14 (currently amended) The process of Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding Claims~~ further comprising the step of disrupting the emulsion to form individual pieces of pet food having irregular exterior surface contours.

Claim 15 (original) The process of Claim 14 comprising disrupting the emulsion mechanically.

Claim 16 (original) The process of Claim 15 wherein said step of disrupting the emulsion comprises using an injector/shredder assembly.

Claim 17 (currently amended) The process of Claim 16 wherein ~~herein~~ said injector/shredder assembly comprises at least a an injector assembly and a shredder assembly.

Claim 18 (original) The process of Claim 17 wherein said injector assembly comprises a means of injecting steam to disrupt the emulsion.

5 Claim 19 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 16 to 18 comprising the step of utilizing said injector assembly to inject a negatively charged colorant into the emulsion.

Claim 20 (currently amended) The process of Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding Claims~~ wherein coloring the emulsion comprises adhering a colorant to said emulsion.

10 Claim 21 (currently amended) The process of Claim 20 wherein said colorant comprises at least one colorant selected from the group consisting of an oil based colorant and a water-soluble colorant.

15 Claim 22 (currently amended) The process of Claim 21 wherein said colorant further comprises at least one component selected from the group consisting of a flavor and a nutrient.

Claim 23 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 20 to 22 wherein said colorant is negatively charged with respect to the emulsion.

Claim 24 (original) The process of Claim 23 wherein said colorant comprises a water soluble, carmel color having a negative charge with respect to the emulsion.

20 Claim 25 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 20 to 24 wherein said colorant is capable of adhering to the emulsion without the presence of a binder.

Claim 26 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 1 to 13 wherein said discharging comprises the step of removing said emulsion from said confined pressurized zone and cutting said colored emulsion in pieces of varying size, shape and color.

Claim 27 (original) The process of Claim 26 wherein said colored emulsion has a moisture content from about 50% to about 65% by weight.

Claim 28 (currently amended) A process for producing a pet food having a layered, meat-like appearance and chunky, irregularly-shaped, individual pieces having a darkened exterior ~~surfaces~~ surface to simulate grill marks which comprises:

passing a product mass through a confined processing zone; and

contacting a portion of the product mass with a colorant while in the confined processing zone.

Claim 29 (currently amended) The process of Claim 28 wherein said product mass consists of an emulsion comprising at least one source selected from the group consisting of a meat source and dry proteinaceous source.

Claim 30 (currently amended) The process of Claim 28 ~~or Claim 29~~ wherein said product mass comprises less than 15% fat by weight.

Claim 31 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 28 to 30 wherein said product mass has a moisture content from about 50% to about 65% by weight.

Claim 32 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 28 to 31 wherein said colorant adheres to the emulsion without the presence of a binder.

Claim 33 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 28 to 32 wherein said colorant is selected from the group consisting of water-soluble colorants and oil soluble colorants.

Claim 34 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 28 to 33 wherein said colorant is negatively charged with respect to said product mass to promote adhesion of said colorant to said product mass.

Claim 35 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 28 to 34 wherein said colorant comprises a colored solution, which comprises from about 30% to about 60% colorant by weight and from about 70% to about 40% water by weight.

5 Claim 36 (original) The process of Claim 35 wherein said colored solution is injected into said confined processing zone at a pressure that is higher than the pressure inside said confined zone and at a flow rate from about 1% to about 20% by weight of the product mass flow rate.

10 Claim 37 (currently amended) The process of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 28 to 36 wherein said confined processing zone comprises a holding tube under a pressure greater than its vapor pressure and the process comprises maintaining the pressure until the protein in said emulsion has coagulated to form a firm emulsion.

Claim 38 (original) The process of Claim 37 further comprising the step of disrupting the emulsion in the holding tube to cause it to be divided into the said chunky, irregularly-shaped pieces.

15 Claim 39 (original) A pet food product comprising individual pieces of a food product mass having a base color and a contrasting exterior color that simulated grill marks on natural meat that has been chopped into irregularly shaped individual pieces prior to serving.

20 Claim 40 (currently amended) The pet food product of Claim 39 wherein said pieces consist of a solidified emulsion comprising at least one source selected from the group consisting of a meat source, a dry proteinaceous source and a vegetarian food source.

Claim 41 (original) The pet food product of Claim 40 wherein the exterior color comprises a colorant selected from the group consisting of water-soluble colorants and oil-soluble colorants.

25 Claim 42 (original) The pet food product of Claim 41 wherein said colorant adheres to the emulsion without the presence of a binder.

Claim 43 (currently amended) The pet food product of Claim 41 ~~or Claim 42~~ wherein said colorant is negatively charged with respect to said product mass pieces to promote adhesion of said colorant to said pieces.

5 Claim 44 (currently amended) The pet food product of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 39 ~~to 43~~ wherein said pieces comprise less than 15% fat by weight.

Claim 45 (currently amended) The pet food product of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 39 ~~to 44~~ wherein said pieces have a moisture content from about 50% to about 65% by weight.

10 Claim 46 (currently amended) The pet food product of ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 39 ~~to 45~~ wherein a minor portion of the pieces has the contrasting color on substantially all of their exterior surface.

Claim 47 (original) The pet food product of Claim 46 comprising a mixture of said pieces with further individual pieces having the single base color on substantially their entire exterior surface.

15 Claim 48 (original) A pet food product that has an underlying base colour throughout the product and a contrasting exterior colour that simulated grill marks on natural meat that has been chopped into chunky, irregularly-shaped, individual pieces prior to serving, the pet food product comprising a mixture of

(1) first individual pieces having a single base colour on their exterior surface

20 (2) second individual pieces having a portion of their exterior surface bearing the contrasting colour,

a minor portion of the second pieces having the contrasting colour on substantially all of their exterior surface.

Claim 49 (original) The product of Claim 48 wherein said second pieces comprise less than 15% fat by weight.